for 1993-94 to improve the viability of industrial projects including iron and steel projects.

(4) Reduction of customs duty on raw materials such as refractories and ferro alloys to reduce production costs of steel.

The impact of these measures will also continue into the Ninth Five Year Plan.

(c) and (d) In a study conducted by Metallurgical and Engineering Consultants (India) Limited (MECON) various measures were identified for technological upgradation of electric arc furnace units in the country. These include introduction of high power transformers, oxygen assisted melting, secondary refining, continuous casting etc. Since electric are furnace units are mostly in the private sector, the initiative for technological upgradation has to come from the units themselves. To facilitate import of technology, iron and steel industry has been included in the list of high priority industries. This enables iron and steel units to freely import technology within certain specified norms.

Production cost of Steel

613. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to introduce a package of measures aimed at reducing the capital and production costs of steel; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) and (b) The budget proposals for 1993-94 contain measures aimed at reducing the capital & production costs of industrial projects including steel plants. These include lowering of customs duty on project imports and reduction of minimum interest rate on commercial advances. Besides, reduction of customs duty on imported raw materials & consumables like pig iron, ferrow-alloys, refractories, graphite electrodes etc. will also reduce the production costs of steel.

Visakhapatnam Steel Plant

614. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a circular was issued during last November by the Management of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant in regard to salaries of employees; and

(b) if so what are the detalls thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) and (b) The Management of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has reported that keeping in view its difficult financial position, there was apprehension about some delay in the payment of salaries of the employees for the month of November, 1992. As a precautionary measure and in accordance with the provisions of payment of Wages Act, the Management had addressed the concerned authorities. It was also brought to the notice of the recognised union of employees and also displayed on the Notice Board. The salaries for the month of November, 1992 were however disbursed on the due date.

Modernisation of IISCO

615. PROF. SAURIN BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken a decision regarding modernisation of Indian Iron and Steel Company Limited either by private parties or by Government itself;